

The Arizona Callahan

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The same distinguished writer who gave you such thrilling stories of far places as “The Brazen Peacock” and “Lou-Lou” knows the odd corners of his own country too—as witness this exciting story of adventure among the untamed Beaver Islanders.

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CHAPTER I

Nelly Callahan was the only one to see just what happened. Everyone else in camp had gone down the island that day to get a count of the half-wild cattle among the blueberry swamps.

The wild drive of rain and low clouds to the westward hid Garden Island from sight and lowered all the horizon, until Lake Michigan seemed a small place. Beaver Island was clear vanished, and so was High Island with its colony of Israelites. Nothing was to be seen from this north end of Hog Island except the foaming shallows and the deeper water beyond, and the huge rollers bursting in from the Wisconsin shore—with two other things. One, as the keen blue eyes of the watching girl could make out, was or had been a boat; the other was a man.

She had heard shots, faint reports cracking down the wind, drawing her to the point of land to see what was happening out there toward Garden Island. For a long while there was nothing to see, until the boat came into sight. It was only a blotch, rising and then gone again, gradually sinking from sight altogether. Few would have seen it. Nelly Callahan, however, was an island girl, and her eye was instantly caught by anything outside the settled scheme of things. So she knew it for a boat, and after a time knew that it had gone down entirely.

Presently she made out the man. To her intense astonishment he was sitting in the stern of a canoe, and paddling. Canoes are rare things in the Beaver Islands these days; here in the center

of Lake Michigan, with the nearest land little more than a mirage above the horizon, there are other and safer playthings, and life is too bitter hard to be lightly held.

Yet here was a canoe driving down the storm, a rag of sail on a stumpy mast forward, tarpaulins lashed over freight-rolls amidships, the man paddling in the stern. What connection was there between him and that sunken boat, and those shots behind the curtain of rain and mist?

That he was trying to get in under the curving line of exposed ledge and shoal that ran out from the point was obvious. If he missed, he would be carried on out to the open lake, for once around the point his chances of getting to land were slim. Nelly Callahan watched him admiringly as he fought, gaining inch by inch, now leaning hard on his paddle, now stroking desperately as the gusty wind threw off the canoe's head. The odds were worse than he could realize, too; all along the point there were shoals, running only two to three feet of water, and his canoe evidently carried a centerboard.

Suddenly she saw the paddle snap in his hands. The canoe swayed wildly over, swayed back again, rose on a sweeping foam-crest and was flung forward. Another instant, and she would have been rolled over, but the man snatched out another paddle and dug it in. Again the stubborn, straining fight, but he had lost ground, and the current was setting out around the point of land.

Still, he had a good chance to win. He was closer, now; Nelly Callahan could see that his shirt was torn to ribbons, that his mouth was bleeding; and those things did not come from wind

and rain alone. The canoe was a wide lake-cruiser, safe enough in any sea except for her heavy load—but this rock-studded shore water was safe for no craft. All the wide expanse around the Beavers is treacherous with rocks barely awash.

An invisible hand seemed to strike the man suddenly, knocking him forward on his face. The canoe staggered, lay over on one side—she had struck bottom. Frantically the man recovered, jerked up the centerboard, threw in the pin. But he was too late; he had lost the game. The bow, with its scrap of sail, bore off before the sweep of wind, and like an arrow the canoe darted out around the point and was gone.

For a moment Nelly Callahan stood motionless at the edge of the trees. Then she turned and started to cut across the base of the long point, to get a view of the north shore beyond. There was no trail, however. Nobody lived on Hog Island; the brush was heavy and almost impenetrable. Excited, breathless, the girl struggled on her way, but knew that she was too slow. However, she kept on. Presently she burst through the final barrier, her feet slipping and sliding on the ground-pine that trailed across the sand, and came out on the northern stretch of shore. Nothing was in sight.

For a little while she stood there, dismayed, agonized, incredulous. She had been a long while getting here, of course; yet some sign of man or canoe, even had the latter capsized, must have been within sight. Here around the point the force of the rollers was lessened, too. Yet everything was empty. Man and canoe had vanished.

A shout roused the girl. She glanced over her shoulder, fear flitting into her blue eyes; then she turned and retraced her steps.

When she stepped back into the clearing of the camp, the others had returned. She shrank within herself slightly, as always, as her eyes swept them; for though Nelly was a Beaver girl, she was also something more. Her mother had come from the mainland, and there was none of the closely interbred strain in Nelly Callahan.

“Where ye been?” called Matt Big Mary, her father, combing out his tangle of black beard with knotted fingers. “Get the coffee on, girl! It’s needin’ it we are, the day.”

It was something of a tribute to Matt Callahan that he was not known by the usual island diminutive, though the peculiar system of nomenclature obtained to distinguish him from his cousin Matty Basset Callahan. He was a giant of a man, massive as an oak, in his deep eyes a brooding, glooming shadow that had lain there since his wife died.

The others were merry enough, however, for Hughie Dunlevy had fallen into the swamp and mired himself head over ears; small wonder that Jimmy Basset and Willy Tom Gallagher made sport at that, since Hughie Dunlevy was a great man on the island, holding a second mate’s ticket, and strong as any two men except Matt Big Mary. He was fishing this summer, going partners with Matt, and had bought a half-interest in the Callahan cattle that ran here on Hog Island. Men said in St. James that he would make a good son-in-law to Matt, for it is always the wildest who settle down the best, and if he would

but leave Jimmy Basset's moonshine liquor alone, he had a great future fronting him.

Here for a week they were, pulling the long stakes that had held pound-nets all the spring out at the edge of deep water where the great trout and whitefish ran, and working the north island shore with trap-nets and bloater lines. Here for a week were the four men, with Nelly Callahan to cook and mind camp. She and her father occupied the old shanty at the edge of the clearing; the other three slept in the brown tent near by.

Now, any other Beaver girl would have at once drawn general attention to the sunken boat, which would wash in and make salvage, and to the presumably drowned man and his canoe. But Nelly Callahan kept quiet. She had become a changed girl since getting home from her school-teaching this spring, and finding that her father had made a match with Hughie Dunlevy for her; much had happened; sorrowful things had transpired; and Nelly Callahan was biding her time.

Half an hour passed by, and the noon meal was over; and since the weather was too bad for work, there was naught to be done but sit and smoke. Then Matt Big Mary took Jimmy Basset and Willy Tom Gallagher with him, and a trap-net from the big launch dragged up under the trees, and set off down the shore. He gave Hughie Dunlevy a significant wink.

"We'll take the skiff down to Belmore Bay," said he, "and be setting a trap out beyond the old wreck, and maybe pick up a fifty-dollar box o' bass come Saturday. Hughie, me lad, keep your eye on the camp."

“Aye,” said big Hughie, grinning all over his broad, good-natured face; and they filed off down the shore on their two-mile tramp to Belmore Bay. Nelly was keenly aware of the strategy, but made no comment. She was afraid of Hughie, as well she might be. A fine, strapping lad he was except when he was crossed, and good-humored while he had his own way and there was no liquor in him; yet he was one to be afraid of.

“There’s more cattle down the island than we looked for, Nelly,” said he, chewing at a cigar and watching the girl as she cleaned up. “The buyer will be over from East Jordan next week, and then there’ll be doings. What’s more, there’s some big pine in yonder that’s never been cut out. I’m thinkin’ of raftin’ it over to the mill.”

“Good idea, if you owned it,” said a strange voice. “But you don’t.”

Hughie Dunlevy turned, stared, came to his feet with a leap. There at the edge of the trees, his approach unheard, stood the man whom Nelly Callahan had seen in the canoe. He wore nothing but his ragged shirt, the most essential half of a pair of overalls, and canvas shoes. Short, curly red hair crowned a face that was weather-hardened, humorous, strongboned; one glimpsed sparkling gray eyes that could either laugh or glitter, and a wide, generous mouth. Dripping wet as he was, the stranger showed bruises and a cut lip, and a red streak ran across his half-exposed chest.

“If you could spare me a bite to eat, young lady, I’d appreciate it!” exclaimed the stranger genially. “Did I scare you folks? Sorry! My boat went down, and I was washed ashore, saw the

smoke of your fire, and came for it. Is that a fish mulligan I smell? Then if there's any left, have pity on a starving man!"

Nelly, with a smile at his laughing words, turned to the big pot. Hughie Dunlevy regarded the stranger with a frown on his wide features.

"Where'd ye come from? Who are ye?"

"Callahan's my name," said the stranger, coming forward.

"You're no island Callahan!" said Dunlevy promptly. The other laughed.

"No, I haven't that honor; but our ancestors were kings in Ireland at the same time. I don't go by that name either; mostly folks call me Hardrock."

"Hardrock Callahan, eh?" exclaimed the girl, not liking the general aspect of Hughie Dunlevy. "Well, I'm Nelly Callahan, and this is my father's camp, and you're welcome. Shake hands with Hughie Dunlevy and make yourself comfortable. I'll have this mulligan hot in a minute, and coffee's all ready."

Hardrock stepped forward and extended his hand. Dunlevy accepted it, though not with any marked warmth, and for an instant the two men measured each other.

"What was that you said when you showed up?" demanded Hughie. "About me not owning this timber?"

"Something like that, I guess." Hardrock Callahan laughed cheerfully. "I happen to own it myself. Oh, coffee ready? Thanks, Miss Callahan—or if I may say so, Miss Nelly! I hate to use the

name of Callahan on the Beavers—too many other Callahans here already.”

He sat down, turned his back to the scowling, indeterminate Hughie, and sipped the hot coffee. Nelly Callahan did not smile, however, as she put the mulligan pot in the embers. It had come to her that while she was crossing the point, this man must have worked his canoe in to the shore, have dragged it up, and have made camp. And what was this story of owning the timber?

“You and me will have a talk,” said Hughie Dunlevy, “when you’ve had a bite to eat.”

“Right,” said Hardrock Callahan. “I’ve had one or two talks already this morning.”

The girl looked at him, met his twinkling gray eyes, and smiled despite herself.

CHAPTER II

Nelly Callahan saw that this man Hardrock was a stranger; and yet he was not a stranger. No one but a fool would have walked ashore on the Beavers and claimed ownership of land, unless he was known and accepted; for little good his law title would do him. Hardrock was certainly not a fool, however; and at the same time he had some knowledge of the islands. He had hidden his canoe and the stuff in it; and it was significant that Nelly did not look upon the story he told as a lie, but as justifiable precaution. Was it his motorboat that she had seen sinking?

“And did ye say,” inquired Hughie, recalling the boat, “that your boat had gone down?”

“Motorboat,” and Hardrock nodded in affirmation. “Hit a sunken rock out yonder and raked her bottom out.”

“Where from?”

“St. James.”

Hughie scowled at that, as well he might, since no one but an islander was from St. James; and this man was no islander. Set in the middle of Lake Michigan, inhabited by a hundred and fifty families, each related to the others, living by the loot of the lakes and woods, the islanders were a clannish lot who clung together and let the world go by. A few Indians lingered; a few outsiders had roamed in; a few tourists came and went; and over on High Island was the colony of Israelites—silent, wistful

men with wide eyes and hairy lips. No law was on the Beavers, nor ever had been, save when King Strang established his brief Mormon kingdom at St. James. There was not an officer in the group, not a judge nor a lawyer nor a doctor, and one man was as good as another; and once when the revenue men came to pry around, with talk of the Eighteenth Amendment, there were dark tales of what happened by night—but no more revenue men came. As for game wardens they were not fools.

The Beavers were not out of touch with the world, however. Scarce a large boat on the western lakes but had from one to ten islanders aboard, and the Beaver Gallaghers were known from Buffalo to Duluth; how many island men lay at the bottom of Whitefish Bay, it was hard to say. Some, who made money, spent the winters in Chicago or elsewhere; and Bowery Callahan, who swung the island vote, was State road-inspector and traveled up and down the land enjoying his ease.

Nelly looked at the two men by the fire, and felt a sudden hurt in the heart of her for the smiling stranger. He had no fear in his eye, and under his brown throat his skin was white like ivory, and his arms under their tattered sleeves were smooth as silk. At him as he ate glared Hughie Dunlevy, broad and dark like all the Dunlevys, rippling with great muscles, a man with strength to toss a box of fish like a toy; and many a tale was told of Hughie on the lake boats, and how he put the boots to any man who dared stand up to him.

Now Hardrock sighed, and smiled at Nelly, and thanked her for his meal.

“We’ll have our talk,” said he to Hughie, “and then I’ll have a smoke.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” said Hughie. “What are ye doing here?”

“Resting on my own land, if you want to know. I bought this end of the island from Eddie John Macaulay in Charlevoix.”

There was no parry between the two of them, no hesitation. Hardrock looked Hughie in the eye and gave him the news straight and direct.

“Buying isn’t keeping,” said Hughie. “We’ll have a word about that matter. Eddie John told us to take the timber if we wanted it, and take it we will.”

The gray eyes of Hardrock glittered for a moment.

“Take it you wont,” said he bluntly.

Hughie laughed, and it was a laugh to reach under the skin and sting.

“Is that so, Mr. Callahan? It’s sorry I’d be to hurt ye, and you washed ashore and out of luck; so keep a civil tongue in your head. Have no such talk around Matt Big Mary, I warn ye, for this is his camp and mine, and he’s a bad man in his anger.”

Hardrock’s thin lips twitched. “So they said about Connie Dunlevy this morning in St. James. I hope he’s not related to you? He came out on the dock to have a talk with me, and I think they’re taking him over on the mailboat this afternoon to the hospital.”

Hughie scrambled to his feet. "Glory be! What have ye done to my brother Connie, ye red-haired outlander?"

"Not a thing," said Hardrock, and chuckled. "Poor Connie fell off the dock. I think he broke a rib or two, and maybe his shoulder."

"Get up!" cried Hughie hoarsely, passion flaming in his face. "So that's who marked ye up, eh? Then I'll finish the job—"

Hardrock stretched himself and began to rise, lazily enough. Just then Nelly Callahan stepped forward.

"Don't, Hughie!" she exclaimed. "It isn't fair—you mustn't! He's all worn out—"

Hughie turned on her and shoved her aside. "Out o' this! Stand aside, and see—"

He never finished the sentence, for Hardrock was off the ground like a spring of steel, a billet of firewood in one hand, and the sound of the blow could be heard across the clearing. Struck behind the ear Hughie Dunlevy threw out his arms and went down in a heap. Hardrock looked at Nelly Callahan, and the glitter of his eyes changed to a smile.

"So that's that," he said coolly. "Too bad I had to use the stick, Miss Nelly, but you spoke the truth when you said I was done up. Don't worry about him—he'll come around after a bit. Do you suppose you could find me a bit of dry tobacco? Then we'll sit down and talk things over."

For a moment the girl looked at him. She was blue of eye and black of hair, and the color was high in her cheeks; and when

she smiled there came a dimple on either side of her mouth, and her body held a spring of the foot and a supple grace of round lines that the school-teaching had not taken out of her. Suddenly a laugh broke in her eyes.

“Hughie had it coming, I think,” said she, and turned. “I’ll get you the tobacco.”

She got him some, and sat down at the fire and watched him stuff it into his pipe and light it with an ember. Hughie Dunlevy lay where he had fallen.

“Father and the other boys will be back in an hour or sooner,” she said. “I think you’d better go and get that canoe of yours, and be off while you have the chance.”

Hardrock gave her a swift look, then chuckled.

“Oh! Saw me land, did you? No, I’m not going, thanks. I’m staying.”

“Then you’ll have trouble, I’m afraid.”

He shrugged, and lay back on one elbow, smoking contentedly.

“Very likely. Eddie John Macaulay thought he worked a smooth trick when he sold me this end of the island, timber and all, but I’d been warned beforehand. I spent the night at St. James and went up to the dance and had a grand time. Connie Dunlevy had too much moonshine, though, and this morning he started to make trouble.”

“Listen, please!” said the girl, an urgent note in her voice. “You can’t take this seriously—but you must! You don’t understand.

You'll not be allowed to stay, after all that's happened. Who was shooting out in the channel? What boat was that I saw sinking?"

Hardrock took the pipe from his lips and regarded her for a moment.

"My dear Nelly," he said quietly, "I'm afraid you're the one who doesn't understand. Did you ever hear of Danny Gallagher?"

Her eyes opened at that. "Danny? Why of course! His father Vesty owns the sawmill down at the head of the island. But Danny has been away two years, in Arizona."

"And I've come from Arizona," said Hardrock. "That's where I got my nickname. I've been running a mine out there, and Danny has been working with me. He's a fine boy, Danny is! He told me so much about the islands that I came up here when I got a year off, and I'm going to settle down in a cabin here under the trees, and finish writing a mining book for engineers. Danny has written his father about me. I meant to look up Vesty, but haven't had a chance yet."

The troubled comprehension in the blue eyes of the girl deepened at this.

"Why didn't you do it first?" she broke out. "If people knew that Danny had sent you here, and Vesty Gallagher would answer for you, there'd have been no trouble! Vesty is a big man on the island. A word from him—"

"My dear girl, I stand on my own feet," said Hardrock quietly. "The sunken boat you saw was mine. Two of Connie's friends

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